1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

shells, they gave them totem names. They caught a number of fish, such as mullet and flatfish and others, and they gave them all names. 773

"Come," said the older sister, "we must go now, for the sun has gone down. We will go quickly."

They crossed the plain the other side of Elcho Island to the bush. They went to the bush and found bush food there, and other things that black people use, such as stringy bark for houses. They named all these things.

They sat down and stopped here in the bush country. They sat down on their feet, with their knees out in front, just the way women do today. That is why the women do this now. They looked around at the people there. They looked at the people; there were very few people, and different from what they are now. The women said to themselves, "What are we going to do? We have no husbands."

They had vaginas, but they were not large the way they are now. They were not large enough for sexual intercourse, but could only be used for urination. They took a small piece of wood and hit themselves on each buttock so they could make plenty of people and their vaginas would grow larger, just as they are now. They were walking at this time by the Goyder River. They had two yam sticks with them. They sat up high on their heels like women do when they have children. Because of this there were plenty of people there. [844]

These two women looked like women, but they also looked like Wongars and like our grandfathers a long, long time ago. Our grandfathers came out from the wombs of these women. They left the Goyder River country and the Arafura Sea country and went on over toward the Gunwinggu country. They went down in the ground there. Before they went they gave all the trees, stones, birds, animals, everything names. They named the mud and everything. That is why we have names for these things today. We did not name them ourselves. Wongars gave them their names. Our names belong to us. We can name ourselves, but everything else in the world has a name for it.

Before the two women came to us they made a wooden totem. One was a woman, and they made another one a small girl. They also made an iguana ranga, a parrot one, a stone ranga, and a fire ranga. They made a big Narra ceremony and put all these rangas in one place. When they did this they thought they would make all the water into land and have nothing but dry land, and they would have the turtles and fish live in dry places, but trochus shell talked to turtle and fish and to porpoise. He said, "Let us go back into the sea. We shells will keep ourselves halfway between on the beach and you people can go into the water. The fish can go out a little way. The turtle must stay out in the deep water. It is all right for him to come in and lay his eggs, but that's all."

Those two Djunkgao sisters paddled along in a canoe and there were no

3: Mountford E-5 (1948) 1956 Ol17 Murngin Ol17

THE ART OF YIRRKALLA

(b) DEATH AND BURIAL

There are three important events in the life of every male aboriginal of Arnhem Land—in fact, in the life of any tribalized Australian aboriginal: birth, when he leaves the land of the spirits and enters the every-day world; initiation, when he is admitted into the sacred or ritualistic world, where age makes him increasingly important; and death, when he leaves the every-day world, and again enters into the land of the spirits.

Although there are few rituals associated with birth, those of initiation and the later age-grading ceremonies are long and complicated, for it is by these ceremonies that men are admitted deeper and deeper into the secret life of the tribe.

At death, the burial rituals extend over many weeks, their purpose being not only to send the spirit so happily to its future home that it will not be a danger to the living, but also to allow the living to adjust themselves to their loss.

The burial ceremonies at Yirrkalla have three main phases: (i) the ceremonies at death, (ii) the cleansing of the bones, and (iii) the final burial, after which the spirit of the dead leaves for its aboriginal 'heaven'. If the dead are of the *dua* moiety, the spirit goes to Purelko, and if of the *jiritja*, to Naikunna.

(i) *The Ceremonies at Death*

When a man dies his relatives gather round the dead body, wailing loudly, the women cutting their scalps with sharpened bones until the blood flows freely. After a short period of wailing the men form a group apart from the women and chant the long series of songs which belong to the totemic group of their dead companion. Next morning the men proceed with the rites of burial, first by rubbing red ochre over the body of the corpse, and on that painting his totemic design.[13] The men also make two bark effigies[14] which they put under the arms of the corpse. They explain to him that the effigies are his children, whom they have killed and placed beside him to prevent him being lonely and wishing to return to haunt the living. The corpse is then wrapped in a thick layer of paper-bark and tied with string.

While all this is being done, other men are erecting a platform of logs about five feet in height and covering it with a layer of leaves. Then, while the men chant another series of totemic songs belonging to the dead man, two aborigines

13. This totemic design is the same as that painted on his body during circumcision. See body paintings associated with circumcision, Pl. [illegible], Warner (1937), pp. 115-16, in his description of the interpretation of the mortuary rituals of the Murngin, an adjacent people, reveals that the totemic design is painted on the body of the dead man so that the spirits, or *Mokoi*, can identify him.

14. Similar to the bark figures, Fig. 54, p. 49. Frazer (1926), p. 59, records: 'In Tahiti . . . the priest took a number of small slips of plantain leaf-stalk, fixed two or three pieces under each arm of the corpse, placed a few on the breast, and then, addressing the corpse, said, "There are your family, there is your child, there is your wife, there is your father, and there is your mother. Be satisfied yonder (that is, in the world of the spirits). Look not toward those who are left in this world."'

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
OI17 Murngin OI17

and this symbolized menstruation blood. The latter is translated colloquially in this region as "spring blood", a menstruating woman being known, in translation, as a "spring woman". 773 [841]

There the two women sat, the younger menstruating, and the older with an intermittent flow of afterbirth blood.[8] It was at this time that Julunggul smelt the blood, emerged from the well to swallow the Sisters, and made rain. [844]

When the Wauwalak saw the rain clouds gathering, the elder sister said: "Well, young sister, you had better run down and get some paperbark so that we can finish this *murlk*".

"No, sister", replied the other. "I have the same as you (that is, blood flowing); it is a very happy time, for this is my first menstruation. It's not like you, sister, you know about it because you have had it before, but this is my first time. I'm not going to go from this hut. I'm going to look after your daughter, while you yourself go out for bark. You know, if I go it might run all over the place. I can dig a hole in the middle of the *murlk* and let my blood flow into it, then no one can see it."

"All right", agreed the older sister. She went out and collected more stringy-bark, and at the same time obtained yams and animals for food, as in the above version. She was able to collect these easily, for she had a good hunting dog called *Djirawa* (the name meaning, "a black cloud during dry weather time"). She returned to the camp with the food and bark.

They made fire and began to cook this food, but it all "flew" away in turn to the sacred well. The younger sister asked the other, "You know why all these animals have run away?"

"I don't know", was the answer. "There might be something in this place (that is, something sacred). Something might come along to our camp." It was at about this time that the Snake, who had been watching them, sent out lightning. . . .

The sequence of events int his version has been changed, but the final section conforms to the first story.

The next version is illustrated by a detailed drawing (see Plate VI and "key" text figure 1) depicted in red, yellow, blue, green and black crayon on brown paper,[9] a substitute for stringy bark, the normal medium, by two Ri:radjingu men named Mauwulan and Wondjuk (father and son), the former being the headman for the Wauwalak cycle. 773 532

8. Said by aborigines to continue for about two days after child-birth.
9. Reference: No. 105, Feb. 4th, 1947, Book 18, Series A, R. Berndt.

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
OII7 Murngin OII7

684 stating his case to bystanders: 'I "pushed" these young
682 men to kill you because you took my wife; she was not promised to you, she was never yours and always belonged to me. That is why you die.'

Wife-stealing usually results in the woman being brutally beaten or speared, and whether she goes willingly with the seducer or is forcefully stolen makes no difference to her punishment. She shows no resentment, and indeed she regards lenient treatment as a slight to her charms.

848 Because of Yulengor marriage customs the question of illegitimate children does not occur. There are frequent illicit relations, but as every girl has a husband her children do not arouse comment. If an irregular union should be openly consummated, the children do not suffer permanently, for irregular births are absorbed into the horde and into relationships which they would have had if their mother had been correctly mated.

163 Women have about two children each, though some have as many as five or six and one I know has a dozen. Many children are born, but the population is not increasing, except on mission stations where medical attention is avail-
[165] able and child-welfare taught. In the bush, infant mortality
862 is high, and long periods elapse between births. Children are not weaned till they are five or six years of age, and I have seen grandmothers ten years and more after the birth of their last child successfully suckling grandchildren.

●844 In child-birth Nature is allowed to take her course and no assistance is given beyond occasional pressure. If the child is born normally and quickly, it probably survives, and so
[845] does the mother, but when anything abnormal occurs there is a stillborn child and the mother is often injured in a way that prevents her from having any more children. Blood accompanying the placenta is tabu and is meticulously buried. Ordinarily the mother is walking within three or four hours of a birth, and within a day she goes hunting.

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
O117 Murngin O117

842 [833] it is an invitation to the new spirit to come to the mother from the spirit world. Ideas on the birth question are very vague and the time factor is ignored. Wogburra, who had been taught to read and write and had lived amongst white folk for twenty years, told me that his wife was about to give birth to a child, and gossip named Miniji as the father. He intended to spear Miniji. I asked when his wife had last seen Miniji, and he was certain that it had been two years previously, when Miniji left for his tribal country.

849 142 Babies are smoky pink in colour at birth, and mothers smear them with a mixture of ashes and water to hasten the darkening of the skin. From birth the child lies in the sun,

854 [853] and as soon as it can clutch a chunk of red meat it is allowed to suck it. A mother carries her infant under her arm on a thick roll of soft bark, but the child soon learns to sit on her shoulder; it clutches her hair for support and sleeps through

142 a great part of the day. Most babies are curly headed, fat, strong, and contented, but as soon as they start eating bush food they develop distended stomachs and become thin and prone to disease.

855 [595] In the better type of family the utmost affection is shown by all wives toward the children of the husband's other wives, and it is sometimes difficult to say which is the mother.

[853] She does not always suckle it herself, nor does the infant object to a variation. If a mother dies, the care of her children is assured, and I have seen only two children that could be called waifs or strays.

[861] Children are pampered unbelievably and are rarely punished. The most a mother will do when her patience is exhausted is to shake it by the shoulder, shout at it and

857 threaten it with a ghost or a white man. Imitating their elders, the youngsters learn their lessons and make fun for themselves in the hard days of childhood, though their games seem to foreshadow the strenuous adult life ahead of them. Girls play at gathering food, making huts and weaving dilly-bags,